

TAMARACK MEADOWS ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

PALS# 60763

PROPOSAL

Background In February and September 2013, the District IDT analyzed, and the Feather River District Ranger approved two aspen complex enhancement projects in the Tamarack Flat area. Because the timber harvest aspect of the projects was never economically viable, the projects were never implemented. The Tamarack Flat area burned severely in the North Complex Fire (September 8, 2020). This accomplished the desired condition of removing encroaching conifers and their nearby seed source. However, the remaining fire-killed trees represent a hazardous fuels danger and could inhibit expansion of quaking aspen and wet meadow plant communities and habitats.

Proposed Project Location The Tamarack Meadows Enhancement project consists of 8 meadows located approximately 2 miles west of Little Grass Valley Reservoir north of NFS system road 22N94 at Tamarack Flat.

Proposed Project Action and Description We are proposing to enhance 132 acres of wet meadows and surrounding riparian habitats by removing fire-killer conifers from meadows M-2, M-3, M-4, M-5, M-6, M-7, M-8, and M-9 in the Tamarack Flat area (Figure 1). We also propose to sow bare ground within the project area with native seed gathered from elsewhere in the same or nearby meadow.

If any of the fire-killed trees can be salvaged as part of the nearby Tamarack Chimney Salvage project that would be allowed. Most of the acres will have low to no economic value or unsuitable ground for traditional tractor ground harvesting. The work is anticipated to be service work carried out by partners through volunteer agreements. However, if funds were available contract services could be used to implement activities.

Felled trees and slash can be removed using a combination of hand-pile and burn, grapple-pile, and burn, stacking firewood for permits or campgrounds nearby roads and outside the meadows. We will authorize small rubber-tired equipment such as skid steers, grapple equipment, or skidders.

Snags and large down wood will be retained to SNFPA standards and guidelines.

Purpose of Action An important part of the mission of the USDA Forest Service is the management of aquatic species and habitats, including the restoration and maintenance of diverse communities of rare flora and fauna. Healthy streams, rare wet meadows, and quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) plant communities are dependent on the natural balance of functioning hydrological processes featuring clean water and saturated soils. High elevation streams, meadows, and quaking aspen forests are a crucial component of many western landscapes, providing biological diversity, critical wildlife habitats, as well as highly desirable scenic beauty and beneficial watershed resources. Today, wet meadow and quaking aspen plant communities in California occupy only a fraction of the overall forest type land-base.

Need for Action The January 2004, Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment provides for identifying and restoring vegetative communities and aquatic habitats outside the range of natural variability.

Additional Information The proposed action is initially thought to fall within the Categorical Exclusion (CE) authorized and described in 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6): timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction.

The project is anticipated to have a decision in Fall, 2021 and implementation can begin as early as Fall, 2021. Please provide comments to Oswaldo Angulo, oswaldo.angulo@usda.gov or Clay Davis, clay.davis@usda.gov